

# IDENTIFYING DEMOTIVATING FACTORS FOR ARABIC LEARNING IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the factors contributing to demotivation among students learning Arabic in an Islamic Higher Education Institution (IHEI). Drawing from existing literature on demotivation in language learning, the research aims to fill a gap by specifically examining demotivation in the context of Arabic language education at IHEIs. Through a quantitative research method involving 64 participants from the Foundation Studies Department, the study analyses teacher-related, classroom-related, and student-related factors. Findings reveal that while teacher-related factors are generally perceived positively, certain classroom elements, such as an emphasis on grammar and translation, contribute to demotivation to some extent. However, the most significant demotivation stems from student-related factors, including anxiety, limited self-study techniques, and low self-confidence. These findings underscore the importance of addressing student-related factors to enhance motivation and success in Arabic language learning. The study emphasises the need for tailored support systems, including motivational seminars, peer mentorship, and counseling services, to address students' self-confidence issues and language learning-related anxiety. Additionally, it suggests adopting pedagogical approaches that prioritise individual student needs and preferences to ensure active engagement and enthusiasm. The study concludes by recommending ongoing research and assessment of demotivation factors to inform curriculum development and teaching methods, ultimately fostering a vibrant and inspiring learning environment for Arabic language education at IHEI.*

**Keywords:** *Demotivating, language learning, factors, foreign language*

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## Introduction

The significance and indispensability of languages in the Malaysian education system as primary vehicles of instruction cannot be denied. Malaysia is well-known for its multicultural society, characterised by a varied range of ethnicities and cultures, resulting in the prevalence of different languages. As per the National Education Policy, Malay is declared as the official language of the nation, while English is acknowledged as the secondary language. In Malay medium National schools, both Malay and English are utilised as the main languages of teaching. On the other hand, non-Malay medium National-type schools, also known as Vernacular schools, use Mandarin in National-type Chinese schools and Tamil in National-type Tamil schools, alongside Malay and English.

Lack of motivation among language learners is a major issue that leads to their failures or limited progress in studying a foreign language. As per a study conducted by Iqbal Ranjha et al. in 2021, demotivation is defined by Dörnyei (2001) as "particular external factors that diminish or weaken the motivating foundation of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action". The elements that result in students' discouragement in language learning or reduce their excitement, as identified by Dörnyei (2001), are commonly known as demotivation factors. These variables can be classified as either internal or intrinsic, pertaining to the students themselves, such as a lack of self-assurance or unfavourable attitudes towards the language. In addition, there are external or extrinsic elements linked to teachers and the learning environment, such as instructional techniques, classroom ambiance, and the curriculum.

Alyousif and Alsuhaibani (2021) have reported that previous research on demotivation in language learning has identified various factors that demotivate language learners in different contexts. These factors have been studied by Al-Khasawneh (2017), Çankaya (2018), Evans and Tragant (2020), Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), and Zang (2007). Many of these studies have specifically examined demotivation among university students. Nevertheless, no research has been carried out to examine the factors that lead to demotivation among students enrolled in Islamic higher education institutions. Hence, the aim of this study is to examine the factors that discourage students from learning Arabic language at an Islamic Higher Education Institution, given that passing the course is a requirement for graduation. The research question formulated is as follows, derived from the study objective: What are the factors that contribute to demotivation among students at IHEI in the process of learning Arabic Language?

## Literature Review

### Arabic Language Learning as a Foreign Language

The prioritisation of Arabic language instruction in Malaysia is motivated by its religious importance. Notably, the influence of Arabic on its speakers surpasses that of other languages on their respective speakers (Xuan et al., 2020). This unique significance has drawn attention to the challenges and strategies associated with learning Arabic as a second language in Malaysia. Many individuals struggle to achieve fluency, primarily due to the scarcity of Arabic language resources. For instance, Yahaya et al. (2019) highlighted that the lack of vocabulary and an unsupportive atmosphere for conversational Arabic are significant barriers. Consequently, these challenges hinder learners' ability to speak fluently. Therefore, successful approaches to acquiring Arabic focus on developing and utilising linguistic resources, as emphasised by Samah et al. (2016). This section underscores the intricate relationship between resource availability and language fluency, setting the stage for understanding motivational factors in language learning.

## **Demotivation**

Building on the challenges highlighted in the previous section, it is crucial to address the concept of demotivation, which has emerged as a significant factor in language learning. According to Dornyei (2001), demotivation refers to 'specific external forces that reduce or weaken the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action.' It is important to clarify that demotivation does not equate to a complete loss of motivation. Instead, it signifies a reduction in motivation caused by various external and internal factors. These factors, as discussed by Alyousif and Alsuhaibani (2021), may relate to the teacher, learner, subject matter, or learning environment. Understanding these dynamics is vital to addressing barriers to effective language acquisition.

### **Factors that De-Motivate Students in Learning Foreign Language**

In identifying the concept of demotivation, this section seeks to identify and analyse the specific factors that significantly hinder students' ability to successfully learn foreign languages. These factors can be broadly categorized into three main areas: teacher-related issues, classroom-related factors and student-related factors, each of which plays a crucial role in influencing students' motivation and engagement in the learning process.

#### **Teacher-Related Factors**

The role of the teacher is widely regarded as one of the most significant influences on students' motivation levels. According to Anwar Qurban and Meccawy (2023), teachers' behaviours and attitudes are key contributors to demotivation, with inappropriate actions potentially leading to a decrease in student interest. For instance, teachers who rely on ineffective or outdated teaching methods, such as delivering long and monotonous explanations or using uninspiring materials, often fail to engage students and may even cause boredom. In addition, negative feedback, especially when it is perceived as unfair or overly critical, can significantly diminish students' self-esteem and confidence, further exacerbating their disinterest in learning. Furthermore, the lack of constructive and encouraging comments can create a barrier to student engagement, leading to disengagement from the learning process. These challenges underscore the critical need for educators to adopt teaching strategies that are both stimulating and responsive to the individual needs of students, ultimately fostering a more supportive and motivating learning environment.

#### **Classroom-Related Factors**

Apart from the teacher's approach, the physical and emotional aspects of the classroom environment play a crucial role in shaping student motivation. Unsuitable learning materials, such as dull or irrelevant textbooks, and a lack of engaging content can seriously deter students from actively participating in class activities. Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) highlight that the use of monotonous and uninspiring course books and resources can result in a significant decline in students' motivation levels. Moreover, the physical characteristics of the classroom, including its size, lighting, and the availability of technological tools, also contribute to the overall learning experience. A classroom that is poorly lit, cramped, or lacking modern resources may create an uncomfortable learning atmosphere, which can, in turn, lead to feelings of frustration or anxiety. Such a tense and unwelcoming atmosphere can make it more difficult for students to focus and engage with the material, thereby impeding their ability to effectively learn the language. This highlights the importance of establishing a positive and comfortable classroom environment that supports both the emotional and cognitive needs of students, thereby enhancing their motivation and overall learning experience.

### **Students-Related Factors**

Finally, factors related to the students themselves, such as a lack of self-confidence and a deficiency in intrinsic motivation, also contribute to the de-motivation experienced during the language learning process. Hamada (2011) points out that students with low self-assurance, often due to limited language skills or a fear of making mistakes, may find it difficult to actively participate in class activities and may shy away from challenging tasks. This lack of confidence can prevent students from taking risks in their learning, such as attempting to speak or write in the target language, which can hinder their progress. In addition, the absence of intrinsic motivation—where students fail to find personal satisfaction or enjoyment in the language learning process—can lead to a lack of effort and a negative attitude toward language acquisition. Without a genuine interest or passion for learning the language, students are less likely to invest the time and energy required for improvement. These factors underscore the complex interaction between individual characteristics and external influences, demonstrating that both personal and environmental factors must be considered when addressing student demotivation in foreign language learning.

Together, these factors reveal the multifaceted nature of student demotivation and highlight the need for a holistic approach that addresses not only the teaching methods and classroom environment but also the psychological and emotional needs of the students themselves.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research strategy, utilizing a formal, objective, and systematic technique that relied on numerical data. The data collection process involved an online survey administered through Google Forms, which included predetermined inquiries and corresponding answers (Creswell et al., 2018). The selection of participants was done using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that considers the characteristics of the population and the objectives of the study. The research examined 64 participants, who were semester two students at the Foundation Studies Department. The sample size of 64 was chosen to ensure manageability and depth in data analysis, given the constraints of time and resources.

#### **Research Instrument**

The survey questions used to assess the variables in the study were adopted from Tuyen and Cat Tien (2019). The questionnaire consisted of two primary sections. The initial segment collected demographic data, including gender. The second section comprised statements specifically formulated to evaluate the reasons that demotivate students from studying the Arabic language. These characteristics included students' surroundings and awareness of attainable objectives.

#### **Participants**

The selection of participants was done using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique chosen for its ability to focus on specific characteristics of the population relevant to the study's objectives. The study was conducted using an online survey administered through Google Forms. The target population consisted of students enrolled in the Foundation in Human Sciences programme during the second semester at Sultan Ahmad Shah Pahang Islamic University (UnIPSAS), located in Kuantan, Pahang. Table 1 presents the demographic data of the participants:

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	39	60.9	60.9	60.9
	Male	25	39.1	39.1	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

**Table 1. Demographic information of participants**

The present study included a total of 64 students who are currently in their second semester of the Foundation in Human Sciences programme. All of these students are currently enrolled in the Arabic language course as a prerequisite. An analysis of gender distribution indicated that there was a slight majority of female students, comprising 60.9% of the total, with a total of 39 participants. On the other hand, male students made up 39.1% of the total, with a total of 25 participants.

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected via an online survey link provided by Google Forms, which was sent to students through WhatsApp. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and were free to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, the researcher emphasized anonymity. The survey questions were administered in English, and data processing began once a sufficient number of responses had been collected. The data was analyzed using statistical software to identify patterns and correlations relevant to the study's objectives.

#### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The researchers employed descriptive analysis approaches to analyse the data, utilising software tools such as Excel and SPSS to extract the data. The inquiry explored many categories and topics linked to the elements that discourage students from learning the Arabic language. These variables were classified into three groups: Factor 1 - factors related to the teacher, Factor 2 - factors related to the classroom, and Factor 3 - issues related to the student.

## Findings and Discussion

### Teacher-related factors

**Table 2 Descriptive statistics for teacher-related factors**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers_shout	64	1	5	2.30	1.094
Students_mistakes	64	1	4	2.12	.917
Not_friendly	64	1	4	1.87	.900
No_emotion	64	1	4	1.91	.955
Favoritism	64	1	5	2.33	1.055
Less_attention	64	1	5	2.22	1.175
Unprepared	64	1	4	1.73	.840
Negative_feedback	64	1	4	1.95	.950
Rarely_test	64	1	5	2.30	1.217
Never_teach	64	1	4	1.70	.867
Hardto_understand	64	1	5	2.06	1.082
Poor_pronunciation	64	1	4	1.63	.745
Unfair_grading	64	1	5	2.00	.959
Rarely_encourage	64	1	5	2.09	1.165
Valid N (listwise)	64				

The data in Table 2 reveals that the average scores for the items assessed ranged from 1.70 to 2.33. The average score for the 14 items analysed was 2.02. This average indicates that students, on average, reported a moderate degree of demotivation in their Arabic language learning as a result of variables associated to their teachers. Essentially, the results suggest that certain students agreed that factors such as their teachers' conduct, attitudes, instructional techniques, and methods of giving feedback and evaluation did not have a negative impact on their learning experience. The moderate mean score suggests that students hold a balanced viewpoint on how teacher-related elements affect their motivation levels in Arabic language acquisition.

### Classroom-related factors

**Table 3 Descriptive statistics for classroom factors**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Topics_uninteresting	64	1	5	2.03	.835
Irrelevant_content	64	1	3	2.05	.765
Grammarly_focused	64	1	5	2.78	1.215
Translation	64	1	5	2.86	1.167
No_communication	64	1	4	2.03	.854
Inappropriate_pace	64	1	5	2.27	.963
Too_difficult	64	1	5	2.62	.968
Tense_classroom	64	1	5	2.58	1.096
Valid N (listwise)	64				



The data in Table 3 demonstrates that the average scores for the surveyed items varied from 2.03 to 2.86, with a mean score of 2.45. This suggests a moderate amount of general demotivation, indicating that individuals may be experiencing certain classroom elements that are causing demotivation, while the degree is not very high. Upon examining the average ratings presented in Table 3, it is evident that participants reached a consensus on three distinct elements pertaining to lessons: an emphasis on grammar, an emphasis on translation, and the perceived challenge of learning exercises. These features are intricately linked to the instructional methods employed by teachers in the classroom.

Moreover, certain participants conveyed sensations of unease or strain in the classroom setting, which had a substantial adverse impact on their acquisition of the Arabic language. Hence, the data collected from the questionnaire indicates that although some characteristics related to the classroom did contribute to demotivation, most students expressed contentment with these features. To summarise, the information suggests that classroom-related elements have a nuanced impact on motivation, with an overall moderate level of demotivation. There are specific concerns regarding instructional concentration and the atmosphere in the classroom.

### Student- related factors

**Table 4 Descriptive statistics for student-related factors.**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memorising	64	1	5	2.70	1.191
Study_method	64	1	5	2.84	1.224
Fails_test	64	1	5	2.56	.990
Lack_confidence	64	1	5	2.75	1.222
Lose_understanding	64	1	5	2.48	.992
Learning_difficulties	64	1	5	2.70	1.136
Nervousness	64	1	5	2.94	1.283
Valid N (listwise)	64				

The data displayed in Table 4 shows that the mean scores range from 2.56 to 2.94, with an overall average mean score of 2.75 regarding factors connected to students. This indicates a significant degree of discouragement among the participants in relation to their experiences in learning the Arabic language. The data presented in Table 4 offer substantiation that a minimum of three distinct elements associated to students may potentially contribute to the observed demotivation among the participants.

Initially, the participants expressed experiencing anxiety during their Arabic language classes. This emotional reaction could pose a substantial obstacle, affecting their level of involvement and drive in the process of learning. Furthermore, the results indicates that the participants demonstrated a restricted understanding of Arabic self-study techniques. Their little understanding of appropriate self-study methods may impede their capacity to autonomously strengthen their language proficiency beyond the confines of the classroom.

Additionally, a significant element that contributes to demotivation is the documented lack of self-assurance among individuals when it comes to acquiring proficiency in the Arabic language. Their lack of confidence may hinder their inclination to actively partake and involve

themselves in language acquisition endeavours. Hence, the data suggests that student-related factors, including anxiety, limited self-study techniques, and low confidence, collectively contribute to a significant level of demotivation among the participants in their pursuit of learning the Arabic language.

## Discussion

This study investigates the elements that contribute to the demotivation of students in their Arabic language learning journey. It specifically focuses on three main categories: factors connected to teachers, factors related to students, and factors linked to the classroom. An analysis of these components is not only vital for comprehending the mechanisms of demotivation but also necessary for formulating efficient approaches to improve the overall learning encounter.

The study's findings are in agreement with previous studies undertaken by Tuyen and Cat Tien (2019), Kikuchi and Sakai (2009), and Huang (2016), suggesting a similar pattern across different circumstances. More precisely, the evidence indicates that factors directly associated with teachers' instructional techniques, duties, and conduct do not have a detrimental impact on students' motivation levels. Essentially, the study highlights the proficiency and commitment of Arabic language instructors at IHEI in properly carrying out their duties and obligations.

A significant finding from the study is the subtle viewpoint that emerges from a subgroup of pupils who exhibit discontentment with their teachers. This subgroup, which may consist of students with lower proficiency or those facing learning difficulties, emphasises the complex interaction between individual student traits and the teaching methodology. The intricacies of the relationship between students and teachers highlight the necessity for customised support solutions that address the varied learning requirements of the student population.

Shifting focus to elements relevant to the classroom, the study reveals an intriguing story. Although the majority of students do not view these circumstances as discouraging, a nuanced intricacy arises. The results suggest that the teachers at IHEI create a favourable atmosphere that promotes student self-reliance and freedom. Nevertheless, the study recognises that the lessons provided, although intended to empower students, may unintentionally bring difficulties that could potentially discourage them. The contrast between these two aspects highlights the need for careful consideration while creating educational activities that foster curiosity and involvement without overloading the students.

The study focuses on various elements connected to students, exploring a wide range of valuable findings. Many students recognise the impact of internal influences on their levels of motivation. The foreground of attention is occupied by issues such as a perceived deficiency in self-assurance, increased anxiety during Arabic language sessions, and challenges in achieving proficiency in the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). This investigation highlights the inherent drive present in kids and underscores the complex and diverse character of their learning process.

The data suggest that student-related factors have a greater influence on motivation than teacher-related or classroom-related factors. This statement is consistent with the wider educational conversation that acknowledges the crucial influence of students' self-perception, confidence, and innate motivation in determining their path to success.



Ultimately, the comprehensive examination of factors that impact student motivation in Arabic language learning uncovers a complex interaction of teacher-related, classroom-related, and student-related components. Although teacher and classroom issues may not be the main causes of demotivation, the study emphasises the crucial significance of comprehending and tackling student-related factors. These findings add to the increasing amount of data, emphasising that students' inherent motivation and self-assurance play a crucial role in their successful language learning experiences. As instructors and institutions negotiate the intricate terrain of language education, it is crucial to recognise and adapt to the many needs and perspectives of students in order to provide a really stimulating and inspiring learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, this study has provided insight into the complex array of factors that contribute to demotivation among students studying Arabic language at Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs). The analysis included factors relating to teachers, classrooms, and students. Remarkably, characteristics connected to teachers and classrooms were not shown to be significant causes of demotivation, as students generally viewed their teachers as skilled and their classrooms as favourable for learning. Nevertheless, the study highlighted that student-related characteristics, including low self-confidence, anxiety, and limited self-study methods, significantly lead to a moderate to high level of demotivation among participants. The results emphasise that the internal drive and self-perception of students are crucial factors in determining their success in learning the Arabic language. Creating inspiring learning environments in educational institutions necessitates addressing student-related aspects to cultivate a really engaging educational experience.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have important significance for educators, institutions, and policymakers involved in the teaching of Arabic language at Islamic Higher Education Institutions. The findings emphasise the necessity of customised assistance systems that cater to the varied needs and perspectives of students. Educators should contemplate incorporating interventions aimed at enhancing pupils' self-assurance, mitigating worry, and offering counsel on efficacious self-directed learning techniques. Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge the intricate relationship between the unique attributes of each student and the methods of instruction employed, underscoring the significance of tailored educational encounters. Institutions can get advantages from fostering an atmosphere that enables students to feel empowered, while also ensuring that instructional materials provoke curiosity without overwhelming learners. Policymakers should take into account these findings when formulating language education policy in order to augment the overall motivation and achievement of Arabic language learners.

### **Recommendations**

Derived from the knowledge acquired via this study, a number of suggestions can be put forth to enhance the process of acquiring the Arabic language at Islamic Higher Education Institutions. Initially, educational institutions should provide support programmes and workshops specifically designed to enhance students' self-assurance and tackle language learning-related anxiety. These programmes may encompass motivational seminars, peer mentorship, and counselling services. Furthermore, educators should embrace a pedagogical approach that prioritises the needs and preferences of individual students, taking into account their diverse levels of skill and preferred methods of learning. This will help to guarantee that students remain actively involved and enthusiastic about their education. Institutions might also

allocate resources towards the acquisition of self-study tools, such as language laboratories and online learning platforms, in order to allow students to assume responsibility for their language learning process. Finally, continuous research and assessment of variables that cause demotivation should guide the creation of curriculum and teaching methods, promoting a vibrant and inspiring learning environment for Arabic language education at Islamic Higher Education Institutions.

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